SHADOW AND LIGHT.

An Autobiography

...By...

Judge Mifflin Wistar Gibbs,

Late U. S. Consul to Madagascar.

There is no man living who is more able to write an autobiography, and make it interesting and historical than Judge M. W Gibbs late consul to Madagascar from the United States, and probably the most picturesque of the Afro-Americans of the old school, and certainly the most experienced. Judge Gibbs has just issued from press "Shadow and Light" an autobiography and we have read no book of its nature which is more instructive and better written than the book under the consideration. Booker T. Washington wrote the introduction to the book and in the opening paragraph he says: "It is seldom that one man, even if he has lived as long as Judge M. W. Gibbs is able to record his impressions of so many widely separated parts of the earth's surface as Judge Gibbs can, or to recall personal experiences in so many important occurrences." Mr Washington struck the keynote of this review, and had he gone into details a little more a review have been necessary. In the preface, Judge Gibbs gives his excuse for the appearance of the work as follows: "During the late years abroad, while reading the autobiographies of distinguished men who had been benefactors, the thought occured that I had a varied career, though not as fruitful or as deserving of renown as these characters, and differing as to status and aim. Yet the portrayal might be of benefit to those who, eager for advancement, are willing to be laborious students to attain worthy ends."

It may be interesting to know that Judge Gibbs is seventy-nine years of age; he was born in Philadelphia in 1823, and the story of his rise, which he so wonderfully narrates, is the same old story, only that young Gibbs had more varied experiences than the average young man who succeeds.

At the age of twelve young Gibbs was in the employ of a very wealthy lawyer of Philadelphia, and being compelled to best his own path, since his father died when he was only eight years of age, and a pupil in a school at Philadelphia. On his way one day with Mr Fisher to the latter's plantation in Maryland he took Gibbs along. He had never seen a slave in bondage in his life When he reached Maryland seeing the slaves being driven by the slave driver, he asked Mr. Fisher who they were. Mr. Fisher told him that they were slaves and asked the young boy how he would like to be a slave. Judge Gibbs says: "My answer was quick and conformed to feeling. I would not be a slave" Fitly spoken. No grander declaration I have ever made From that time, Judge Gibbs became a worker in the anti slavery movement. He says in his book that he attributes his horror to slavery to the fact that he had heard so very much to the Nat Turner episode, which occurred shortly before he made this declaration There is no history in print that gives as much of the anti slavery movement as Judge Gibbs does in his effort. For two reasons: Because he was intensely interested in the liberation of the slave and because he was a worker in the ranks. He depends not on searching in the records of the past, but he depends solely on his vivid memory.

Speaking of his association with Frederick Douglass in the work, the author says: "In 1849 Frederick Douglass Charles Lenox Remond and Julia Griffith an English lady, attended the National Anti Slavery Convention, held in Philadelphia. At its close, Mr. Douglass invited me to accompany him to his home at Rochester, and then to join him in lecturing in the Western Reserve" Mr Gibbs accepted the invitation, and that was the beginning of his eventful career. He tells how the trip to Rochester was the event of his subsequent trip to California. And we doubt whether there is to be found a more accurate, if not embellished history of the forty-niners in California. The Judge pauses long enough in the story of his arrival at San Francisco and his work, where he engaged in a very large business after many reversals, to give this advice: "Do not hesitate when you are without choice to accept the most humble and menial employment. It will be a source of pleasure, if by self denial, saving your earnings, you keep a fixed intent to make it the stepping stone to something higher."

One of the most interesting chapters in the book is that dealing with British Columbia, where gold was discovered in 1858, and where Judge Gibbs went in quest of gold and freedom in all that the term implies. The Judge however after a short residence over in the island, came back to this country and married. His description of the unrestful spirit of the country in 1859 as he traveled through the country is splendid. He seems to have not let a single incident of importance slip by. His views on the Lincoln-Douglass episode are well founded and shows a keen perception, and they are the more valuable now since the peace of the gods pervades the very air, and the Judge has had chance for reflection. In no chapter of the book does the man forget the boy, and just in the midst of a description of the island of British Columbia Judge says: "Get a trade boys, if you have to live on bread and apples while attaining it." It may be said that the Judge has one himself. Judge Gibbs has a whole history of the admission of California to the Union and of the discovery of gold and the strenous life incident upon such revelations.

But it is his direct influence on the life of the Negro as reflected in his book as well as exemplified in his life, which makes the work so intensely absorbing and valuable. The Judge played a mammoth part in the state of Arkansas in the reconstruction period, and his life since those days has been such a flattering success, that his part is really important, since he died not with the occasion, but rose higher after. The Judge first entered political life in Vancouver Island when he was elected to the common council, but his great political life which he so deftly portrays, is in the state of Arkansas. where after a wandering career, he finally settled.

The book is a record of very many meetings held by the leaders of the Negro race in this country, and gives the exact reason for the meeting and the final outcome and the effect of its proceedings on the body politics Says the Judge, "It can be properly noted that among the many helpful signs of race advancement not the least is the broader fraternalization of our religious bodies. Our churches having the ear of the masses, their opportunity and growing disposition to unite for the material, as well as the spiritual progress and advancement of our people, cannot be too highly commended."

But while the reminiscences of the Judge are valuable, his opinion on the solution of the Negro problem is worthy of attention and reflection. Speaking on Negro domination, "The cry of Negro domination like the baseless fabric of a vision has as little foundation. The problem to be solved is not what is or shall be the status of the colored man born beneath the flag, but whether the forces of Christian civilization, the genius and spirit of our government, impartiality in the execution of law, without let or hindrance, are equal to the performance of their mission, or are only 'sounding brass and tinking cymbals.'" Further he remarks, "The assumption that citizens of a common country cannot live together in amity is false."

Being present at an indignation meeting on one occasion, when one brother sang out "How long O Lord are we to bear these discriminations?" The Judge said "For some time longer. All things considered, we are making progress, and will continue in the ratio we obtain education and wealth. When we have more banks, railroad stock, fewer high sounding societies such as The Seventeen Stars of the Consolidation, The Rising Persevering Free Sons of Joshua. That sounds very hard, but the Negro has got to learn it, and the Judge with his seventy years of experience had just as well teach the lesson, as any one else His story of the condition of the state of Arkansas where he threw his fortune after the war and its subsequent delivery is thrilling The Judge was a leader and a lawyer. It may not be amiss to say that he was appointed county attorney for his county, and later elected municipal judge for the city of Little Rock, where to his credit, as the records will show, he dispensed justice not as a Negro, but as an American citizen.

The Judge was appointed Register of of the Land Office and later still Receiver of Public Moneys. The history of the turbulent times of the Baxter-Brooks fight for supremacy in the state is vividly described and must of necessity be accurate as the Judge himself was one of the men who were directly interested in the outcome.

His stay in Madagascar as United States Consul is told, and the customs of the people are brought to light in a manner which is fascinating and instructive. Each voyage which he took during his career is told in a way which few have ever tried to follow, and the book on the whole is historical. Whether in Philadelphia as a poor boy, on the stump as a lecturer in behalf of the slave, or in California, in quest of gold, or in British Columbia laying a foundation for a great business career, or as member of the common council or in Arkansas studying law and afterwards practicing the profession, or as county attorney and afterwards judge, or as a great political leader in the state and federal office holder, or a member of some conven-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 8.)